What is claimed is:

1   1.   An ordering method comprising:

2   transmitting sales information from an agent server to a user terminal

3   via a communications network;

4   displaying the transmitted sales information at said user terminal to

5   allow a user to select an item, and transmitting a purchase order of the

6   selected item from the user terminal to the agent server for requesting a

7   purchase of said selected item on behalf of said user, said sales information

8   containing items that are only available in sales shops which are not

9   accessible via said communications network; and

10   at said agent server, transmitting an acknowledgment message to said

11 user terminal in response to said purchase order.

1   2.   An ordering method comprising:

2   transmitting sales information from an agent server to a user terminal

3   via a communications network;

4   at said user terminal, displaying the transmitted sales information to

5   allow a user to select an item and transmitting a request signal to said server

6   for a service charge required for inspecting the selected item;

7   at said agent server, determining said service charge depending on

8   contents of the request signal and a cost database, and transmitting the

9   determined service charge to said user terminal;

10   at said user terminal, displaying the transmitted service charge to

11 allow said user to make a decision as to whether an inspection of said

12 selected item is performed and transmitting a request signal to said server for

13 indicating that the selected item be inspected when said user makes said

14 decision;

15   at said agent server, transmitting an inspection report of said item to

16 said user terminal;

17   at said user terminal, displaying the transmitted inspection report to

18 allow said user to make a decision as to whether said item is purchased and

19 transmitting a purchase order to said agent server for requesting a purchase

20 of said selected item on behalf of said user when the user makes the decision;

21 and

22   at said agent server, transmitting an acknowledgment message to said

23 user terminal in response to said purchase order.

1   3.   The ordering method of claim 2, wherein said sales information

2 contains items that are only available in sales shops which are not accessible

3 via said communications network.

1   4.   The ordering method of claim 2, wherein said inspection report

2 contains a bill for requesting the user to pay for said inspection of the selected

3 item.

1   5.   An ordering method comprising:

2   transmitting sales information from an agent server to a user terminal

3 via a communications network;

4   at said user terminal, displaying the transmitted sales information to

5 allow a user to select an item and transmitting a request signal to said server

6 for a service charge required for making a search for a desired item if the

7 desired item is not found in the displayed information;

8   at said agent server, determining said service charge depending on

9   contents of the request signal and a cost database, and transmitting the

10   determined service charge to said user terminal;

11   at said user terminal, displaying the transmitted service charge to

12   allow said user to make a decision as to whether said search is performed and

13   transmitting a request signal to said server for indicating that the desired

14   item be searched when said user makes said decision;

15   at said agent server, transmitting a search report of said item to said

16   user terminal;

17   at said user terminal, displaying the transmitted search report to allow

18   said user to make a decision as to whether said item is purchased and

19   transmitting a purchase order to said agent server for requesting a purchase

20   of said item on behalf of said user when the user makes the decision; and

21   at said agent server, transmitting an acknowledgment message to said

22   user terminal in response to said purchase order.

1   6.   The ordering method of claim 5, said sales information contains

2   items that are only available in sales shops which are not accessible via said

3   communications network.

1   7.   The ordering method of claim 5, wherein said search report

2   contains a bill for requesting the user to pay for said search of the selected

3   item.

1   8.   An ordering method comprising the steps of:

2   a)   transmitting sales information from an agent server to a user

3   terminal via a communications network;

4   b)   at said user terminal, displaying the transmitted sales

5 information to allow a user to select one of a plurality of decision branches;

6 c) transmitting to said agent server a purchase order if the user

7 selects a first decision branch, a first request signal for requesting a first

8 service charge required for inspecting a desired item contained in said

9 displayed information if the user selects a second decision branch, and a

10 second request signal for requesting a second service charge required for

11 making a search of a desired item which is not contained in said displayed

12 information if the user selects a third decision branch;

13 d) at said agent server, determining said first service charge if said

14 first request signal is received depending on contents of the first request

15 signal and a cost database, determining said second service charge if said

16 second request signal is received depending on contents of the second

17 request signal and a cost database, and transmitting the determined first or

18 second service charge to said user terminal;

19 e) at said user terminal, displaying the transmitted service charge

20 to allow said user to make a decision as to whether an inspection or a search

21 of the desired item is performed and transmitting a request signal to said

22 server for indicating that the desired item be inspected or searched when said

23 user makes said decision;

24 f) at said agent server, transmitting an inspection report of said

25 item or a search report of said item to said user terminal, depending on

26 contents of the request signal of step (e);

27 g) at said user terminal, displaying the transmitted inspection

28 report or search report to allow said user to make a decision as to whether

29 said item is purchased and transmitting a purchase order to said agent server

30 for requesting a purchase of said item on behalf of said user if the user makes

31 the decision; and

32   h)   at said agent server, transmitting an acknowledgment message

33   to said user terminal if the purchase order of step (c) or step (g) is received.

1   9.   The ordering method of claim 8, wherein said sales information

2   contains items that are only available in sales shops which are not accessible

3   via said communications network.

1   10.   The ordering method of claim 8, wherein said inspection report

2   contains a bill for requesting the user to pay for said inspection of the selected

3   item and said and said search report contains a bill for requesting the user to

4   pay for said search of the selected item.

1   11.   An ordering system comprising:

2   a communications network;

3   a plurality of user terminals connected to said network;

4   an agent server connected to said network for transmitting sales

5   information to a user terminal of one of said plurality of user terminals;

6   the user terminal displaying the transmitted sales information to allow

7   a user to select an item, and transmitting a purchase order of the selected item

8   to the agent server for requesting a purchase of said selected item on behalf of

9   said user, said sales information containing items that are only available in

10   sales shops which are not accessible via said communications network; and

11   said agent server transmitting an acknowledgment message to said

12   user terminal in response to said purchase order.

1   12.   An ordering system comprising:

2   a communications network;

3   a plurality of user terminals connected to said network;

4   an agent server connected to said network for transmitting sales

5   information to a user terminal of one of said plurality of user terminals;

6   the user terminal displaying the transmitted sales information to allow

7   a user to select an item and transmitting a request signal to said server for a

8   service charge required for inspecting the selected item;

9   said agent server determining said service charge depending on

10   contents of the request signal and a cost database, and transmitting the

11   determined service charge to said user terminal;

12   said user terminal displaying the transmitted service charge to allow

13   said user to make a decision as to whether an inspection of said selected item

14   is performed and transmitting a request signal to said server for indicating

15   that the selected item be inspected when said user makes said decision;

16   said agent server transmitting an inspection report of said item to said

17   user terminal;

18   said user terminal displaying the transmitted inspection report to

19   allow said user to make a decision as to whether said item is purchased and

20   transmitting a purchase order to said agent server for requesting a purchase

21   of said selected item on behalf of said user when the user makes the decision;

22   and

23   said agent server transmitting an acknowledgment message to said

24   user terminal in response to said purchase order.

1   13.   The ordering system of claim 12, wherein said sales information

2   contains items that are only available in sales shops which are not accessible

3   via said communications network.

1   14.   The ordering system of claim 12, wherein said inspection report

2   contains a bill for requesting the user to pay for said inspection of the selected

3   item.

1   15.   An ordering system comprising:

2   a communications network;

3   a plurality of user terminals connected to said network;

4   an agent server connected to said network for transmitting sales

5   information to a user terminal of one of said plurality of user terminals;

6   the user terminal displaying the transmitted sales information to allow

7   a user to select a desired item and transmitting a request signal to said server

8   for a service charge required for making a search of the desired item if the

9   desired item is not found in the displayed information;

10   said agent server determining said service charge depending on

11   contents of the request signal and a cost database, and transmitting the

12   determined service charge to said user terminal;

13   said user terminal displaying the transmitted service charge to allow

14   said user to make a decision as to whether said search is performed and

15   transmitting a request signal to said server for indicating that the desired

16   item be searched when said user makes said decision;

17   said agent server transmitting a search report of said item to said user

18   terminal;

19   said user terminal displaying the transmitted search report to allow

20   said user to make a decision as to whether said desired item is purchased and

21   transmitting a purchase order to said agent server for requesting a purchase

22   of said desired item on behalf of said user when the user makes the decision,

23   and

24   said agent server transmitting an acknowledgment message to said

25   user terminal in response to said purchase order.

1   16.   The ordering system of claim 15, wherein said sales information

2   contains items that are only available in sales shops which are not accessible

3   via said communications network.

1   17.   The ordering system of claim 15, wherein said search report

2   contains a bill for requesting the user to pay for said search of the selected

3   item.

1   18.   An ordering system comprising:

2   a communications network;

3   a plurality of user terminals connected to said network;

4   an agent server connected to said network for transmitting sales

5   information to a user terminal of one of said plurality of user terminals;

6   said user terminal displaying the transmitted sales information to

7   allow a user to select one of a plurality of decision branches, transmitting to

8   said agent server a first purchase order if the user selects a first decision

9   branch, a first request signal for requesting a first service charge required for

10   inspecting a desired item contained in said displayed information if the user

11   selects a second decision branch, and a second request signal for requesting a

12   second service charge required for making a search of a desired item which is

13   not contained in said displayed information if the user selects a third decision

14   branch,

15   said agent server determining said first service charge if said first

16   request signal is received depending on contents of the first request signal

17   and a cost database, determining said second service charge if said second

18   request signal is received depending on contents of the second request signal

19   and a cost database, and transmitting the determined first or second service

20   charge to said user terminal;

21   said user terminal displaying the transmitted service charge to allow

22   said user to make a decision as to whether an inspection or a search of the

23   desired item is performed and transmitting a request signal to said server for

24   indicating that the desired item be inspected or searched when said user

25   makes said decision;

26   said agent server transmitting an inspection report of said item or a

27   search report of said item to said user terminal, depending on contents of the

28   request signal,

29   said user terminal displaying the transmitted inspection report or

30   search report to allow said user to make a decision as to whether said item is

31   purchased and transmitting a second purchase order to said agent server for

32   requesting a purchase of said item on behalf of said user if the user makes the

33   decision, and

34   said agent server transmitting an acknowledgment message to said

35   user terminal in response to each of said first and second purchase orders.

1   19.   The ordering system of claim 18, wherein said sales information

2   contains items that are only available in sales shops which are not accessible

3   via said communications network.

1   20.   The ordering system of claim 18, wherein said inspection report

2   contains a bill for requesting the user to pay for said inspection of the selected

3   item and said and said search report contains a bill for requesting the user to

4   pay for said search of the selected item.